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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 001552

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: VP BEMBA FLYING HIGH ON TRAVEL TO U.S.

Classified By: Econoff Peter Newman for reasons 1.5 b/d

1. (C) Summary. On Aug 12, Amb Meece paid an introductory courtesy call on Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba during which Bemba reiterated his desire to meet with U.S. officials during travel to the U.S. in October. Bemba has previously made a strong push for an invitation for official travel to the U.S. He has now taken the track of requesting meetings while already in the U.S. for other reasons, in this case the annual World Bank/IMF meetings. Ambassador diplomatically pushed back on the travel issue citing potential conflicts as well as security concerns during the upcoming IFI meetings in Washington. End Summary.

2. (C) VP Bemba has relaunched his campaign to meet with high-level USG officials during travel to the U.S. He has previously strongly requested an invitation for an official visit to hold meetings with cabinet level officials (e.g. Secretary of State, National Security Advisor, etc). Not

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having received such an invitation, he is now proposing that Post assist in arranging meetings with USG officials while he is in Washington for the World Bank/IMF conferences in early October.

3. (C) Bemba transitioned into this part of the discussion with Ambassador Meece after citing the economic progress the DRC has made, especially since his taking office. He planted the idea as an opportunity to meet with potential investors. Bemba reiterated that the USG has never invited him to the U.S., and that he would like to meet with U.S. officials.

4. (C) Ambassador countered by mentioning several major distractions for Washington officials which would potentially limit their availability in the next two months, including the upcoming UNGA session on Sept 22. (Comment. It is unlikely that Bemba will be permitted by President Kabila to attend the UNGA, even if he so desired, as Foreign Minister Ramazani is of the MLC and closely tied to Bemba. End Comment.) Ambassador also cautioned Bemba that September and October falls during the tail end of the political season in the U.S., and many government officials, especially Congressmen, will not be in Washington. Bemba grudgingly acknowledged that the trip might be a problem, but nevertheless continued to push for USG support for high-level meetings and possible other programming.

5. (C) Ambassador also noted the recent security warning for the IFI conferences. He emphasized that security will be tight and movement in downtown Washington will be restricted, adding another hindrance to meeting facilitation. Bemba seemed to take the comment rather seriously and asked worriedly if this will be a serious problem for travel. Ambassador assured Bemba that we have no recent specific threat information and that he will inform Bemba if there is reason for concern.

6. (C) Comment. We do not recommend an official visit to DC for Bemba, whose motives are in large part, personal. President Kabila has already met with senior USG officials and for Bemba this is a sore spot personally and politically. As head of the MLC, Bemba could potentially face serious human rights abuse allegations by the International Criminal Court. This makes it even less desirable to help arrange high-profile cabinet level meetings for him. End Comment.

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